THE Great Case OF TOLERATION Stated,

And endeavoured to be resolved in order to Publick Security and Peace.

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with Allowance.

LONDON,

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THE Great Cale OF TOLERATION Stated,

And endeavoured to be resolved, in order to publick *Security* and *Peace.*

Three things are to be considered on this Subject,

First, **Whether Toleration be consistant with the very nature and design of Christian Religion?**

Secondly, **Whether it be reconcileable to the best Rules of Government and Policy?**

Thirdly, **Whether it stands with our safety in the present Conjuncture and posture of Affirs?**

And if all these can be made good in the Affirmative, I know not what can be more desired, and why it is not seasonable to be Established and made Perpetual.

TO the first Point, If there is some reallity mixt with so much profession and talk of Religion as is now in the World; If there is indeed a design of Gods Glory, and the Pleas of Conscience are not fictitious and pretended; let Man but consider

consider the nature of his Government over the World, which is to be glorified in a free and voluntary Obedience of his Rational Creatures, and such is to be pure, not forced, and nothing besides his own Command an inducement to it. How doth he disclaim it by the Prophet, *Isa.* 29. 13. *When their Fear towards me is taught by the Precepts of Men.* How well this place agrees with that Compulsion to the Sacrament, or such a Communion, let any one judge that will not pervert the mind of Scripture, and the nature of true Obedience. *Chrisostom* brings us an Argument why Men should be perswaded, not forced, to Reformation of any Fault or Error, because God rewards not those that upon necessity abstain from Evil, but only those that voluntary do it. If a Mans Servant would not do such a thing barely upon his own Masters Command, but another Person must first compel him, & then he doth it; What honour will it be to him, or will he care for such Service? Doth God want the aid of Man to make others Obedient unto him, surely not, nay it cannot be done by outward Violence; one hereby may be brought like a Beast to the Sacrifice, but still there is nothing of the subjection of the Mind. God values not hypocritical Services or a meer external submission, he may be as well glorified in having Bullocks or Goats, for they become subject unto the utmost, even to Death; but if Man who can give, if he requires, an Offering of a free Heart, which is only in his own power, not to be exerted by any human Authority, for this cannot reach so far, and if it could, yet it coming from that would not be accepted: I might multiply many Texts, but what would they all signifie? for there is a common custom through the proud and disdainful Ignorance, but yet Cunning of Men, to slight over what they cannot Answer, they are so presumptuous as to put off all means from the Word of the all-wise God for Foolish and Canting, which make against their own corrupt doings, though themselves will make use of them to maintain their own Interest and Humour against a different Perswasion; to such all these kind of Arguments signifie nothing, and truly no more need to be added, seeing so many are brought to this purpose by Dr *Taylor*, in his *Liberty of Prophesie*, that even all those that have the Reputation for so much Learning & Reason cannot give a perfect and satisfactory Answer to them, they have

Cited by Dr *Hammon*, of Death-Bed Repentance, *Sect.* 35.

have been and are now challenged to do it, for the Opponant is worthy their contending with, and it would be for their ſecular Advantage to keep up the Grandure and State of their Communion, and alſo their own Honour, and undoubtedly it had been done long ſince if poſſible; but that excellent Author argees ſo concluſively from Scripture, Reaſon, Primitive Authority, as is a demonſtration it was the very Truth he contended for, which he made further clear.

Some object *That of Church Cenſures in the Primitive Times*; but there was a great and manifeſt diverſity between them, and what was lately uſed amongſt us; for they were inflected on groſs Hereticks, and they are only ſo on whom the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Tit.* 3. 10, 11. And beſides for ſcandalous Sins, the inceſtuous Perſon, Adulterers, Drunkards, and ſuch like, and not for little Errors or difference in Judgment, as juſt the contrary hath been uſed among us, that even it was a ſhame for Men to act ſuch Severities towards Men, likewiſe much leſs ſhould Chriſtians; every one that hath but the common goodneſs & reſentment of human Nature muſt abhor them; they did moſt ſtir up, whoſe duty it was in meekneſs to inſtruct Oppoſers, and hereby they gave occaſion to indifferent and conſidering Perſons to think (though they might have waved this) as if they wanted Arguments to convince, for there is alſo *ratio ultima Cleri*, who ſhould teach Mercifulneſs, Love, Forbarance, Meekneſs, they did practice the contrary, as if what ſo many do make their Craft, was in danger to be ſet at naught, as they had run ſo far from the Practice and Experience of former times, whether that of *Ezekiel* 34. 4. *(The Diſeaſed have ye not Strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was Sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt; but with Force and with Cruelty have ye ruled them)* hath not been fulfilled in theſe latter Days, let any one ſeriouſly reflect, and the true cauſe of all our Diviſions, Sects and Parties may not be learned from what is ſaid in this Chapter.

There might be many other things urged, but they have been already in Books, and there is no need of further Printing, where its granted by all unprejudiced, unintereſted Men, by thoſe who can diſcern any thing of themſelves, and are not led by the Noſe by them who meet for their Pride and Profit more then for the Truths

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ſake, as may be conſidered, becauſe they will not comply with what they ſeem to teach, with obedience to the Truth, that they who are appointed Officers of Chriſts Kingdom, will not conſent it ſhould be ſo as he himſelf hath ordained it, he could have commanded twelve Legions of Angels, planted his Religion as the Impoſter *Mahomet* did by the Sword, but he uſed none but that of his Mouth, no more did any of the firſt Founders thereof, and the ſame Word is conveyed down to us, which is able to keep the Fear and Worſhip of God in the Hearts of Men, (if managed aright) without aid from the civil Authority. Where the Rulers were *Heathen*, and ſet againſt him, he did make good his Dominion over Men by Miracles, and an extrordinary Power and Aſſiſtance, but now they are *Chriſtian*, they are to give God the things that are Gods, a permiſſion only that his Word and Truth be freely, and without moleſtation made known unto Men. The Divine Will and Pleaſure ſhould inſtantly ſilence all other Reaſons, and in a Chriſtian Country all ſhould comply there-with out of reſpect to him, without any further need of Argument, if People were indeed willing and obedient unto him, as he who at this preſent knoweth the Secrets of all Hearts, will one day judge and manifeſt them; yet in this degenerate Condition of the World, or Apoſtacy from God, notwithſtanding all their ſeeming to Honour him with their Lips, the Devotion and Obedience they pretend to give him, yet this is the moſt inconſiderable Argument, and hath the leaſt effect upon Men, and therefore we are to deſcend to the other. The firſt Conſideration is from future and inviſible things, yet the certainty and greatneſs of them would take away this prejudice, for they alſo will be preſent and before us; for every Day the Gate of Death opens unto them, and ſingle Perſons enter in, and the moſt Healthful and Luſtieſt of us all haſte to it; but ſeeing what is now ſeen and done doth moſt affect, therefore Peace and Safety, Conveniency and Intereſt came in, and is to be ſuſpected will principally determine the Caſe; and ſo the ſecond Queſtion is ſomewhat to be diſcuſſed.

Whether Toleration *be reconcileable to the beſt Rules of Government.*

The end of which is *Peace*, that every one may live quietly and have his own, be Loyal and Obedient unto the King, Loving and Kind

Kind to one another; now it is ſtrange that Religion, which relies wholy upon Mans Obedience unto God, as he hath the ſame from all the Created Beeings of the World, which keeps them all in order; ſo to Man, who is fitly called *the little World*, there being the like neceſſity to maintain Peace on Earth, and good will towards Men, as to keep up the whole courſe of Nature, yet this ſhould be turned into Rebellion, Diſobedience and Confuſion. We learn hereby what is the difference of things in their own Nature, and in their Corruption. *Think ye I come to ſend Peace on the Earth, I tell ye nay, but the Sword*, ſaid the Author of our Profeſſion, and it hath been found true; for as all his Laws and Precepts are moſt excellently contrived, as to the firſt, ſo upon the abuſe and non-complyance with them, the contrary effect hath followed. Who hath ſeen worſe Subjects then the Religious? and yet it cannot be denied but the Goſpel as ſtrictly injoyns Loyalty, as any other Duty whatſoever, and tends very much to the Benefit and Welfare of the Common-Wealth. What can be the reaſon of all this, but only the Hypocriſie of ſome, and Ignorance of others? ſome who made this a bare pretence, and other ſilly Perſons who were beguiled with it. That of *Acts* 4. 19. hath been in every ones Mouth, but then the Eſtabliſhed Laws of thoſe Countries were againſt the *Chriſtian Religion* in general: When the Governors became Chriſtians, then ſprang up Diviſions and Errors, and then they began to take unto, and maintain one ſide, the differing Parties ſtill thought themſelves in the right, and the aforeſaid place applicable to them alſo, and have hence taken occaſion to behave themſelves after the ſame manner as St *Peter* did: Others taking Advantage of their ſimplicity and real meaning, uſing them as Inſtruments to carry on their ambitious Deſigns and ſecular Intereſts; thus the Fire kindled and came forth into a Flame; I cannot ſo clearly expreſs my ſelf, and it would be tedious to run over the exact particular manner, but let any Impartial and Prudent Perſon examine this one thing, and conſider it throughly, Whether conſtraint in matters of Religion hath not occaſioned all the Diſloyalty, wherein this was made the leaſt pretext, or made any noiſe, not only in the four laſt Raigns in this Nation, but in all *Chriſtendom*, and thoſe ſeveral Ages ſince Chriſt and his Apoſtles were upon the Earth, how it occaſioned thoſe Perſecutions and Cruelties even towards them and their Follow-

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ers ; and after when it came likewise to be Established in Countries, (as *Heathenism* and *Jewdaism* were before) then (as afore noted) Divisions did arise and increase, and the Secular Authority descending, and interesting it self as to them, hereby became Trouble, and Insecure either by secret Plots and Conspiraces, or if strong enough, the open Seditions of those that smarted under it; Flesh and Blood are apt to be Mutinous, thinking it better to resist then be tamely Beaten, but when mistaken Conscience and deluded *Zeal* do further stir up, then it is much more so: At this time the crafty Politians came in, who were acted by Ambition and Interest, and did first lead along, and then became Leaders of the Faction. Now these had wanted a Pretext, and the other had not so much as had an Erroneous Principle to have gone by, had it not been for their aforesaid Compulsion. In truth the actings of both are Sinful and Unchristian, in the one designed Hypocrisie, in the other it was Ignorance of that certain Duty of passive Obedience and Suffering for Conscience sake, rather then speaking Evil, and much less then, to lift up the Hand against the Lords Anointed; but as long as Covetousnes and Pride did instigate the first, and when a fly Temptation did offer it self to the latter for avoiding the Cross, by those means which were disputable, and did not appear to them directly unlawful, the Devil who acts at the bottom of all human Affairs, can raise a fair appearance to excuse from outward Pain and Inconveniences; the Illusions of the Spirit of Error, and the Reasonings of the Carnal Man prompt them any way to save themselves from the Storm; one may thus trace out all the Factions and Rebellions that ever were, wherein Religion did make any noise, or was the least concerned, *Cessante causa, cessat effectus.*

Here some will cry, *But this will be the way to let in all Heresie, Error, and a thousand Inconveniences*; but the Civil Magistrate is not so imediately concerned as to them; indeed himself is but a Potsherd of the Earth, though of the greatest size, and consequently hath the same relation to that God with whom we have all to do, and therefore in general is obliged to keep up the Worship and Fear of God, and the right Faith contained in the Scriptures (if he would leave all things as they are there, and with the *Muscovites* forbid all Disputes) however that the Fundamentals be thought no more then comprized in the Apostles Creed, and what were judged by the four

four first Councils as absolutely necessary to Salvation; if he permit nothing to them of holy Life, and his own Government, but there is a distinct order of Men to convince Hereticks and detest Error, the Weapons of whose Warfare ought to be Spiritual and not Carnal, Truth is strong and will prevail, for the Fundamentals here mentioned we are assured, but for all under them, or what may be immagined to be deduced from them, for that infinite number of Consequences and Questions among us, we know not what is Heresie or Error; it is not sufficient alone, when some have got the established Laws of their Country on their side, to call others *Hereticks* and *Erronious*, which is sonner done then proved, and here too often happeneth, according to the old Proverb, *The greatest Fool, &c.* For though I do for my part believe the *Church of England* comes as near to the Primitive Pattern as any now in being, and that her Constitutions are good and true, except some disputable Points which cannot be otherwise, when they come down to such particular Deprivations, as some may be seen in the Thirty nine Articles, yet if a false and corrupted Church should get the upper Hand, it would be an hard case if the bare forwardness and confidence of them should damm all others to Hell, but that not being in their Power is only *Brutum fulmen*; but what is worse, Oppress them here on Earth, who will not likewise be carried away with their Corruption, & so really involve themselves into that wherein they did only frighten & abuse them, for those Controversies and Questions were a fooling, they are rather the Skirts and Borders then the Substance of Religion; and it will be sad and riged to tye and confine Salvation unto any of them: What or who shall determine between the right and wrong? The Scriptures would do it even now, if sincerely considered without Pride and Worldly end; however the Son of God is to judge out of them of every Mans Work; and were it not better to think the Truth, and follow his Directions, to go on peaceably now we are in the way to the same place which we all aim at, and in some measure to begin that here, that is to be our Happiness hereafter, though all ignorant Zeal and Animosity cannot be laid aside, yet good Men in this Life should have that precious Disposition wherein their Spirits are to be made perfect, and all those things to be done away which render Conversation unpleasant in the World, but seeing this is not to be had, whatever bickering there may be

among fellow Subjects, which is also wished it might be hindered as much as possible, is but as the Squabbling of Children amongst themselves, and the Father of our Country might take his effectual care to keep his Authority over them, and yet be safe by letting them alone with their little Wranglings; he may be pleased to lath them into Peace and Quietness, but if he should side with any this would turn the rest against him. That vain Jangling, and many of those Questions in Religion now agitated amongst us, if compared with the weightier matters of the Law, do not deserve a better comparison then this, and for what Differences seem more material, why may they not still remain in that Liberty God hath left them? One Mans Opinion may vary from another, as he doth in Complexion and Stature, and still they are equally Men; one may Worship God after this manner, another after that, as long as God is Worshipped and Served he may be Glorified every way, for he hath prescribed no exact manner or form in his Word, only expressing himself against the Sacrifice of false hypocritical & outward Devotion, when separated from the inward and spiritual. His appointed meanes are allowed, that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth: Indeed there is so little of the very Heart and Substance of Religion in those distinguishing Characters of Communion among us, that why may it not be also applyed, that in every Sect and Party, *He that serveth God and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him*, for to this alone do the Promises belong, without any mention of such a National Church or Congregation, the Kings Authority is subordinate and dependant on the Divine, he doth excellently discharge his Obligation by restoring unto God the immediate Dominion over the Souls of Men; as it is the best Policy, for every one of what ever Condition in this present Life to be faithful unto God, so for him who is his best among Men, in that he layeth the best Foundation for the Security and Happiness of his Government. In those Countries where *Toleration* is allowed, they have none, or very rarely Rebellions or Seditions, this manner of Policy some States have taken, for they are the most unsafe kind of Goverments, but by this way have made it most Secure, so that the Deduction is obvious, if what is in it self insecured be yet preserved this way, much more would that excellent, and in it self safe Form of Monarchy, be the more firmly Established.

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As to the laſt Queſtion, *Whether it ſtands with our Safety in reference to the preſent Conjuncture and Poſture of Affairs?* I do not pretend to underſtand the Intregues and Secrets of State; but if things are ſo indeed, as they are repreſented outwardly, if his Majeſty may be believed (as my Charity doth incline me ſo to do) who hath made ſo many Proteſtations, and in the moſt ſolemn manner as can be well expreſſed, that he hath no further Deſign then what is mentioned in his Gracious *Declaration*, that all things ſhall be continually obſerved as there ſpecified, then there can be no ſuch Danger as is ſurmiſed, and ſome People are ſo forward to inſtil into the Minds of his Subjects, fears of Popery and alteration of Government is the general Whiſpering of thoſe who have called the like in others, not many Years ſince, *The Vice of Faction and Sedition*, by the moſt ſubtil kind of Perſwaſion, (objecting to all thoſe Folly and want of fore-ſight who are not of the ſame Mind) they mightily get them over to their Opinion, raiſing more terrible Preſages and Apprehenſions then is ground for them. It hath been obſerved of an Order of Men, that going out of their Profeſſions, and meddling with matters of State, have done more Miſchief, and cauſed more Diſturbance to Countries, then of all Callings or Trades beſides, whether it holds true at this Day, let any one judge; all goes under the Name of Conſcience, but upon the ſtrict ſcrutiny, it will appear Pride and Intereſt bares the greateſt ſway; if theſe were good Men, as all would be thought ſo, and it is hoped and believed many are, then themſelves are not for being Lords over Gods Heritage; they will not ſtand ſo much for wordly Pride or Grandure, which is contrary to their ſpiritual Vocation, and they Condemn others for beyond Sea: If they believe in him whoſe Miniſters (they ſay) they are, and will take their Lot with him whoſe Kingdom is not of this World, then they will not ſtand up ſo ſtifly for Temporal Juriſdiction and Command; but as it is moſt remarkable they ſhould Live well and handſomely as other Men, and as the Neceſſity and Merrit of the Function is beyend any whatſoever, in reſpect of the good it doth unto Men, in Gods Name, as ſome little requital thereof, let them ſtill enjoy the already Eſtabliſhed, or greater Maintenance; for my part I do ſincerely wiſh it were much better, and more equally diſpoſed for the encouragement of good and

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honeſt Men, and therefore if they have all the further aſſurance that poſſibly can be given, that they ſtill have their Church Poſſeſſions and Rights, and ſo it ſhall be as to Abby Lands, which are veſted in the Gentry, and other Lay-Men; if all the Care and Caution which can be thought of, as to this matter; if this be made as ſure to them as *Magna Charta*, and Men have of their other Eſtates and Liberties; if they have all the Satisfaction and Aſſurance that may be any ways propoſed or found out, this would be the beſt Expedient to end thoſe Fears and Jealouſies, to allay the thoughts of Heat. If that which is already the Principal and Eſtabliſhed Religion of this Country, be ſtill confirmed and ratified ſo to be: If all Churches and Chappels, or Publick or Conſecrated Places be for the ſervice of that only, and none be ſuffered beſides to enter into them; if to prevent Confuſion and Diſorder it be ſo provided, that one Communion doth not interfere with or moleſt the other; if that they keep within themſelves, and uſe not the leaſt outward Violence, nothing to be permitted beyond fair Argument and Perſwaſion, that all Truth may ſtand on equal ground and advantage, I know not why they ſhould be againſt it, who have the moſt on their ſide, and the ableſt Champions to defend it: I would in no wiſe be thought to preſcribe to my Superiours, but with the greateſt Humility & Submiſſion beg leave to offer thus much, that ſome Expedients they may find out, for the firm and happy Eſtabliſhment of things: When reaſonable Propoſals are laid before any, and not accepted, it is a ſign there is ſomewhat further in it then one ſees, or is aware of; if there is no deſign but what is viſible on all hands, if the end be ſincere and good, the common means of Safety are neer and obvious.

In Page 5. Line 32. Read and whither. p. 8. l. 9. r. Politions.

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